

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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O 191515Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0110

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 4432

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT-ELECT SARKIS ON LOCAL SITUATION

1. IN ORDER TO OVERCOME ISLOCATION FROM SARKIS, WORD WAS SENT TO HIM MAY 18 THAT WE WOULD BE HAPPY TO HAVE AN EMBASSY REPRESENTATIVE TALK WITH SOMEONE HE WOULD CARE TO DESIGNATE. SARKIS IMMEDIATELY REPLIED THAT HE WOULD SEE EMBASSY REPRESENTATIVE PERSONALLY FOLLOWING MORNING

ACCORDINGLY, I SENT WARING MORNING MAY 19 TO VISIT SARKIS IN HIS RESIDENCE "ACROSS THE LINE." WARING STARTED OFF BY CONVEYING MY GREETINGS AND BEST WISHES. SAID WE WANTED TO BE OF ASSISTANCE TO HIM TO THE GREATEST EXTENT WE COULD. NOTED THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO KNOW SARKIS' THINKING IN ORDER NOT TO WORK AT CROSS PURPOSES.

2. SARKIS RECIPROCATED MY GREETINGS AND GOOD WISHES. HE EXPRESSED HIS GRATITUDE FOR THE VISIT AND THEN REVIEWED THE LOCAL SITUATION. ALL PARTIES HAD FINALLY REALIZED THAT THERE WAS NO MILITARY SOLUTION

IT WAS REGRETTABLE THAT THIS HAD NOT BEEN REALIZED A YEAR AGO. A POLITICAL SOLUTION THEREFORE WAS POSSIBLE AND, AS THIS WAS THE BEST SOLUTION, HE WAS ACTIVELY WORKING TOWARD IT. HE HAD IN MIND OBTAINING STATEMENTS FROM ALL CONCERNED TO THE EFFECT THAT THEY WERE PREPARED TO STOP THE FIGHTING AND TO SIT DOWN AND TALK. HE WOULD THEN TRY TO ARRANGE ROUND TABLE DISCUSSIONS AND OTHER MEANS OF DIALOGUE. HE WAS SEEKING ARAFAT TODAY AND JUMBLATT TOMORROW. (HE REMARKED INCIDENTALLY THAT THE PLANNED

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MEETING BETWEEN GEMAYEL'S SON BACHIR AND JUMBLATT TOOK PLACE,

BUT WITH A DEPUTY OF JUMBLATT.)

3. SARKIS STRESSED THAT HE WAS REALISTIC ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT THE CHANCES FOR A POLITICAL SOLUTION WERE SLIM, BUT HE WOULD EXHAUST THE POSSIBILITIES. IF HE FAILED, HOWEVER, HE WOULD THEN CALL FOR FOREIGN ASSISTANCE WHICH, AT LEAST IN FIRST INSTANCE, MEANT SYRIAN TROOPS IN SUFFICIENT NUMBER TO REESTABLISH SECURITY. THE RESTORATION OF SECURITY, HE EMPHASIZED, WAS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL. AT THIS JUNCTURE HE WOULD HAVE TO CALL UPON THE UNITED STATES FOR ASSISTANCE IN MAKING THIS POSSIBLE.

4. WARING ASKED SARKIS' VIEWS ON THE RESIGNATION OF FRANGIE. SARKIS REPLIED THAT FRANGIE WOULD NOT RESIGN UNDER THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES AND THAT, AS LONG AS HE, SARKIS, WAS NOT IN A POSITION TO HAVE SUITABLE ACCESS TO EACH SIDE, IT REALLY DID NOT MATTER. WARING, WHO HAS KNOWN SARKIS FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS, REMARKED THAT THIS ANSWER SEEMED TO CONCEAL RATHER THAN REVEAL SARKIS' THINKING. SARKIS THEN SPOKE MORE FRANKLY. IF FRANGIE RESIGNED, THERE WAS SOME HOPE. IF HE DID NOT RESIGN, THEN THERE WAS NO HOPE. HE THOUGHT OUT LOUD AND CONSTRUCTED A SCENARIO THAT MIGHT WORK OR AT LEAST WAS WORTHWHILE TRYING TO MAKE WORK:

A. HE NOTED THAT FRANGIE WANTED A COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING, WHILE PRIME MINISTER KARAME DID NOT, AS THIS MEANT GOING TO JOUNIE AND HAVING FRANGIE PRESIDE THE MEETING AS IS HIS RIGHT. WOULD IT NOT BE POSSIBLE THEREFORE, HE SPECULATED, TO WORK ON KARAME TO OBTAIN THE LATTER'S CONSENT TO A COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING ON THE CONDITION THAT, DURING THIS MEETING, FRANGIE WOULD PRESENT HIS RESIGNATION. (THERE IS A PRECEDENT FOR PRESENTING A RESIGNATION TO THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS EVEN THOUGH THIS NORMALLY IS PRESENTED TO THE PARLIAMENT.)

B. EVEN IF KARAME WERE ON BOARD, IT WOULD STILL BE DIFFICULT TO GET FRANGIE TO PRESENT HIS RESIGNATION. ON THE OTHER HAND THE POSSIBILITY MIGHT BE INCREASED BY ARRANGING FOR THE RESIGNATION TO CONTAIN A PHRASE THAT IT WOULD NOT BECOME EFFECTIVE UNTIL IT WAS READ TO A PLENARY MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT.

C. ONCE THE ABOVE TYPE OF RESIGNATION WAS OBTAINED, A MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT COULD BE CALLED, THE RESIGNATION READ AND SARKIS CONFIDENTIAL

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INSTALLED IMMEDIATELY THEREAFTER.

D. AS A FINAL PART OF THE PACKAGE, AGREEMENT WOULD BE REACHED THAT THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE AT BAABDA WOULD BECOME NEUTRAL TERRITORY WITH AN ACCESS ROAD FROM EACH SIDE.

5. WARING TOOK NOTE OF THE PROPOSED SCENARIO AND ASKED SARKIS HOW THE SYRIANS FELT ABOUT THE RESIGNATION. (SARKIS HAS ALWAYS

MAINTAINED THAT THE FOUR MAIN ELEMENTS TO THE CRISES ARE THE CHRISTIANS, THE SYRIANS, THE PALESTINIANS AND THE LEFT). HE REPLIED THAT THE SYRIANS UNQUESTIONABLY WANTED AN IMMEDIATE RESIGNATION.

6. THE ISSUE OF PRESENTING MY CREDENTIALS CAME UP. IT WAS MADE CLEAR BY WARING THAT IT WAS HOPED THAT THESE WOULD BE PRESENTED TO SARKIS. SARKIS, AGAIN THINKING ALOUD, OBSERVED THAT PRESENTING CREDENTIALS TO FRANGIE WOULD CAUSE A WAVE OF DISSATISFACTION IN THE NON-CHRISTIAN CAMP. HE THEN ADDED THAT, ON THE OTHER HAND, FAILING TO DO SO OVER A LONG PERIOD WOULD CAUSE DIFFICULTIES IN THE CHRISTIAN CAMP AND HINDER GREATLY MY ABILITY TO FUNCTION. IN OTHER WORDS, INSTEAD OF GIVING A SOLUTION TO A PROBLEM, SARKIS MERELY STATED IT IN ALL THE RAMIFICATIONS THAT HAVE ALREADY OCCURRED TO US.

7. FINALLY, SARKIS WAS ASKED IF HE WANTED TO NOMINATE A CONTACT THAT WE COULD APPROACH INSTEAD OF APPROACHING HIM DIRECTLY, OR IN CASE IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE TO APPROACH HIM DIRECTLY. HE REPLIED THAT HE WOULD PREFER A DIRECT APPROACH, BUT THAT IF A TIME AROSE WHEN THIS WAS NOT POSSIBLE, IT COULD BE DONE THROUGH HIS CONFIDANT, FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER FOUAD BOUTROS.

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